**THE PASSIVE VOICE: EXERCISE**

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| **WHAT ARE SOME COMMON MISTAKES?** |  | **WHAT IS THE PASSIVE?** |
| LACK OF AGENCY  When using the passive voice, the agent of the sentence is usually not clear:  **A first aid program was created (by whom?)**  If you transform this into an active sentence, you will see an immediate difference:  ***The Red Cross volunteers* created a first aid program**  The agent (The Red Cross volunteers) is clearly specified in the second, active example; thus many instructors—the ones who you want to understand your writing—will prefer that you use the active voice in your writing.  LACK OF CLARITY  When using the passive voice, often the general voice/opinion of a piece of writing is not clear:  **Despite having many negative attributes, Shylock is considered to be a sympathetic character**  *Who* considers Shylock to be a sympathetic character? The student, critics, scholars or the reader? Of course, the assumption is that it is the student who is the voice of the essay.  **Despite having many negative attributes, Chang and Hussein consider Shylock to be a sympathetic character**  Once you change the sentence into the active form, an agent is necessary. Here, two academics act as agents and provide the voice of the opinion in the writing. |  | Simple active sentences in English are usually in this form:  **S-V-O**  (Subject-Verb-Object)  The girl drove the car.  Simple passive sentences switch the pattern around to this:  **O-V-S**  (Object-Verb-Subject)  The car was driven OR The car was driven by the girl  You can see that the transformation from active to passive requires the subject and object to switch places (or the removal of the subject altogether). The verb form must also be conjugated into the participle form (drove 🡪 was driven).  Therefore, you will usually see the passive construction like this:  **TO BE + PAST PARTICIPLE**  The elephant *was warmed* by the sun |
| **WHEN IS IT RIGHT TO USE THE PASSIVE?** |  | **WORDS TO KNOW** |
| At times, it may be appropriate to use the passive purely for stylistic reasons:  To emphasise a specific object  **Many millions of dollars were stolen during the bank robbery.**  (The stress is on the money, not the bank robbery)  To obscure the agent of an action  **Pest Co. recognises that dangerous pesticides were used on crops in the Northwest.**  (The company distances themselves from the harmful action) |  | **Agent**  **Active**  **Conjugation**  **Object**  **Participle**  **Passive**  **Subject**  **Voice** |
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| **EXERCISE** | | |
| Transform the following sentences from passive to active by rearranging them and adding an agent:   1. The ball was kicked. 2. A welfare system was established. 3. Shakespeare is widely considered to be a master of English theatre. 4. Mistakes were made. 5. Ethnic minorities are discriminated against.   Transform the following sentences from active to passive:   1. The girl built the house. 2. The boy baked a cake for his sister’s birthday. 3. Sandy threw the garbage out yesterday. 4. Kelly increased the sales revenue of the ad agency by 400% 5. Pat instructed the students to put away their books and get ready for the test. | | |